

ORALHEALTH_{ri}

A Quarterly Oral Health Newsletter of the Rhode Island Department of Health

Patricia A. Nolan, MD, MPH
Director, RI Department of Health

December 2002, Volume 1, Number 3

Lincoln Almond
Governor

HEALTH News

Department Receives Oral Health Grant

The RI Department of Health (HEALTH) received \$50,000 per year for four years to support infrastructure development and maintenance of a public/private/not-for-profit coalition targeting improved access to oral health promotion/disease prevention services for underserved Head Start/Early Head Start children with early childhood caries. The funds come from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. The grant aims to reduce the prevalence of early childhood caries (ECC) (also known as “baby bottle tooth decay”, “nursing bottle caries”, etc.) in Head Start children by 40% during the four-year period December 2002 – November 2006.

“Good oral health is a necessity for a young child’s total health.” said Patricia A. Nolan, MD, MPH, Director, RI Department of Health. “Prevention of dental decay in pre-school children is an excellent predictor of healthy adolescents. By focusing on oral health, this grant will supplement the state’s continuing efforts to promote health and reduce the

continued on page 2

RI Dentists Provide Access to Oral Health Care

M. Christine Benoit, DMD, President, Rhode Island Dental Association

Acknowledging a crisis in access to dental care, Rhode Island dentists participate in public dental health insurance programs at more than twice the national average. A 1998 Rhode Island Department of Human Services telephone survey and a more recent Rhode Island Dental Association (RIDA) survey noted dentists’ participation rates at 78% and 71% respectively compared to an American Dental Association (ADA) reported national participation rate of less than 30%. Additionally, the RIDA survey noted that millions of dollars of undocumented pro-bono services are provided by Rhode Island dentists to low-income and minority patients that are not billed to the state’s Rite Care (Medicaid) program.

Due to low fees, cumbersome proprietary claims processes, and excessive failed patient appointments, many dentists will limit the numbers of publicly insured patients treated annually to former patients of record and/or their families. Dr. Andrew Molak, immediate past-president of the RIDA, states, “...the recent RIDA survey indicates that many Rhode Island dentists would like to provide oral health care for more patients covered by public funds, but cannot afford to do so because of low fees and burdensome administration. Rhode Island dentists have repeatedly

shown a strong sense of social and community involvement in providing oral health care services. The leadership of the RIDA has been in constant dialogue with government officials at the Departments of Human

Services and Health in an attempt to eliminate the barriers to access to oral health care.” Access to oral health care is a societal problem that

persists in the state, and Rhode Island dentists will continue to strive to be a significant part of the solution. Additional activities to increase access to oral health care by Rhode Island dentists include: since 1991, volunteer dentists have provided over \$2 million in dental services to disabled and elderly citizens through the Rhode Island Foundation of Dentistry for the Handicapped Donated Dental Services Program; 20 dentists and dental assistants

continued on page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Give Kids A Smile Day	2
Rhode Island OHPAC	2
Children Don’t Visit Dentist	3
Children with Special Health Care	
Needs Oral Health Care Conference	3
CEU Criteria for Hygienists	3
School Oral Health Conference	3
Announcements	4

Message from RIDA

continued from page 1

volunteered at Christina's Smiles, a mobile dental clinic providing free care to needy children, in Providence during June, 2002; and the RIDA and the ADA will debut *Give Kids a Smile* Day February 21, 2003 as a centerpiece of National Children's Dental Health Month. *Give Kids a Smile* will call nationwide attention to access problems among underserved children and underscore dentistry's commitment to improving access. (See related comments on p.2)



Give Kids A Smile Day

Friday, February 21, 2003 has been designated *Access Awareness Day* by the American Dental Association. On that day, thousands of dentists and members of their dental teams across the country will take time from their practices to provide services to underserved children who are not receiving the oral health care they need. The Rhode Island Dental Association (RIDA) is coordinating the statewide effort of participation by Rhode Island dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants as volunteers to provide free educational, preventive, and/or therapeutic services to underserved children. Volunteers may choose to devote time to provide care at the Rhode Island Hospital Joseph Samuels Dental Center (dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants are



needed for a four-hour morning or afternoon session), provide free services for children in their offices, present oral health education activities, and participate in the child identification program *Toothprints*. For further information, contact Shirley Spater, DDS, MPH of RI Hospital at 401.444.5995, Lori Dulac of RIDA at 401.732.6833, or visit www.ada.org/goto/kidssmile.

Editorial Policy

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Comments? Questions?

Articles, ideas and announcements from readers are welcome. Contact the Oral Health Program at: RI Department of Health
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HEALTH News

continued from page 1

health disparities among ethnic and racial minorities and low income populations."

ECC is a major problem in RI given that children most at-risk for ECC are likely to be of minority race/ethnicity and/or from families with low-income; that these groups typically experience more oral disease and less access to care than the general population; and that only 11 pediatric dentists practice in the state. According to recent estimates, early childhood caries affects 1,000-2,500 RI children between the ages of 6 and 48 months old and occurs disproportionately among low income and racial/ethnic minority populations. For information, go to www.healthri.org/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/htm or call Robin M. Lawrence, DDS, MPH at 401.222.1171.

RI Oral Health Professional Advisory Council

The 15 member Rhode Island Oral Health Professional Advisory Council convened November 6, 2002 under the chairmanship of Nicholas Barone, DMD. The Council identified public funding of oral health care services as a critical issue in the state's efforts to improve the oral health of all Rhode Islanders. Guest speakers at this meeting included Department of Human Services staff John Young, CPM, Associate Director, Health Care Quality, Financing, and Purchasing, and Tricia Leddy, Administrator, Center for Child and Family Health. Mr. Young and Ms. Leddy shared their vision of the dental Medicaid program. A lively discussion between Council members and the guest lecturers ensued resulting in a shared commitment to collaboratively address this issue in the immediate future. The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2003.

Young Children Don't Visit Dentist Despite Need

A study published in the November 2002 issue of the American Journal of Public Health utilized data drawn from the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) conducted between 1988 and 1994.

The authors found that:

* Among the 2- to 5-year-olds, 43.3% had visited a dentist in the previous year, while 53.8% had never visited a dentist; among the 6- to 18-year-olds, 77% had visited a dentist in the previous year, while only 8% had never visited a dentist.

* Non-Hispanic black and Mexican-American children and those from families with low educational attainment were more likely than other children to visit a dentist on an as-needed basis only or to have never visited a dentist.

* Children from families with low educational attainment were almost three times as likely to have dental needs as their counterparts from families with high educational attainment.

* Mexican-American children had the highest prevalence of perceived and normative dental needs.

* Among children ages 6 to 18, those with either perceived or normative dental needs were half as likely as their counterparts with no dental needs to have visited a dentist in the previous year or to have a regular pattern of dental care utilization. The former were also more than twice as likely to be episodic users of dental care.

The authors' recommendations, which are based on these findings, address the availability and affordability of dental care. Specifically, they suggest reducing barriers at the provider level by (1) guaranteeing adequate payment through Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program payments, (2) training more pediatric dentists, particularly those from racial/ethnic minority groups, and (3) offering incentives for dental care providers to practice in underserved areas. For more details, see:

Vargas CM, Ronzio CR. 2002.

Relationship between children's dental needs and dental care utilization: United States, 1988-1994. American Journal of Public Health 92(11):1816-1821.

Hygienists CEU Criteria

The Board of Dental Examiners, at the October 30 meeting, endorsed new continuing professional education criteria for dental hygienists licensed in Rhode Island developed by the RI Dental Hygienists' Association. The new guidelines define the responsibilities of the licensee and identify the various categories of credit. The guidelines will be effective with the current three-year accrual cycle for continuing education credits beginning June 1, 2002 through May 31, 2005. Each licensee must obtain 30 continuing professional education credits during this cycle. All licensed Rhode Island hygienists will receive a copy of the new Rhode Island Dental Hygienists' Association Criteria for Continuing Education in a mailing from HEALTH. For information, call Gail Giuliano at 401.222.2171.

School Oral Health

The 3rd Annual School Oral Health Professionals Conference, sponsored by HEALTH and CDC was held October 30. Patricia Nolan, MD, MPH, Director of Health, welcomed school oral health professionals, pediatric dentists and dental hygienists to the conference focussing on abuse and neglect in young children. Howard Needleman, DMD, MS, Senior Associate, Boston Children's Hospital, addressed the role of dental providers in identifying/reporting suspected cases of abuse. Carol Jenny, MD, MBA, Director, Child Protection Program, Hasbro Children's Hospital, addressed the issue from the physician's perspective and presented case studies of her work. The annual conference offers an opportunity for school oral health professionals working with children to share information/best practices.

Conference Proceedings Available on Promoting the Oral Health of Children With Special Health Care Needs

Promoting Oral Health of Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities and Other Special Health Needs documents the proceedings of a conference to develop training and research agendas related to oral health promotion for children with special health care needs (CSHCN). Conference participants included health professionals, educators, policymakers, researchers, and parents. In addition to discussing key conference themes and recommendations, the publication includes information on the following topics: the health

promotion framework, oral disease and care for CSHCN, data and demonstration projects, health-promoting behaviors, interdisciplinary issues, oral-systemic health interactions, and access. The conference agenda, a list of faculty and attendees, a list of federal training and research centers, selected recent articles and reports, and the full text of conference papers are included as appendices. The proceedings are available at <http://depts.washington.edu/ccohr/resource/3sub/3res.htm>.

Announcements

Kids First

Food, Fun & Fitness: Nutrition Expo 2003

RI Convention Center, Providence, RI

February 15-16, 2003 @ 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM

For information, call Karin Wetherill at 401.751.4503

RI Board of Examiners in Dentistry: Board Meetings

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI

January 22, 2003 @ 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

February 19, 2003 @ 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

March 19, 2003 @ 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

For information, call Gail Giuliano at 401.222.2151

RI Dental Association

How to Dramatically Reduce (Or Eliminate)

Discounted Fees—A Nuts & Bolts Approach (7 CEUs)

RI Marriott Hotel, Providence, RI

February 26, 2003 @ 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

For information, call Valerie Donnelly at 401.732.6833

RI Oral Health Professional Advisory Council

RI Department of Health, Providence, RI

February 5, 2003 @ 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM

For information, call Carla Lundquist, at 401.222.7626

Community College of Rhode Island

OSHA Update – online course (2CEUs)

For information, call Michelle O'Brien at 401.333.7333

RI Dental Hygienists' Association

Childrens Dental Health Month Program (2 CEUs)

Children's Museum of Rhode Island, Providence, RI

February 2, 2003 @ 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Skin Lesions of the Head and Neck (3 CEUs)

Fatima Hospital, Providence, RI

March 1, 2003 @ 9:00 AM – 12:15 PM

Massage Therapy for Dental Hygienists (1 CEU)

Fatima Hospital, Providence, RI

March 1, 2003 @ 12:15 PM – 1:15 PM

Progressive Alternative Drug Therapy (3 CEUs)

Fatima Hospital, Providence, RI

March 1, 2003 @ 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM

For information, call Mary Anne Barry at 401.821.2373

RI Dental Assistants Association

The Female Patient (3 CEUs)

Miriam Hospital, Providence, RI

February 11, 2003 @ 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Forensic Considerations in Dentistry (2 CEUs)

Miriam Hospital, Providence, RI

March 18, 2003 @ 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

For information, call Joanne Wilbur at 401.647.2175

RI Special Senate Commission on Oral Health

RI State Capitol, Providence, RI

March 5, 2003 @ 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

For information, call Marie Ganim at 401.222.1772

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www.healthri.org



A Healthy Smile Can Last A Lifetime

www.healthri.org/disease/primarycare/oralhealth/home.htm